

Remarks

Claims 1-4 are pending in the present application. Claims 1 and 2 have been amended. Claim 2 has been amended for clarification under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over Moronaga et al. (US 5,229,864), hereafter "Moronaga." Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Moronaga in view of Jung (US 5,732,159). Claims 3-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Moronaga in view of Nakaya (US 6,295,376). These rejections are defective because Moronaga, Jung, and Nakaya, taken alone or in any combination, fail to teach or suggest each and every feature of the claims as required by 35 U.S.C. 102(b) and 103(a).

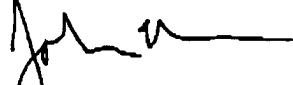
Regarding claim 1, none of the references cited by the Examiner teach or suggest, among other features, a determination step of "determining a correction area around block boundaries, said determination step including computing mask values associated with the input samples, said correction area corresponding to an area where the mask values are different from zero," and a correction step for "adding a random binary number comprising at least one bit to the filtered samples belonging to the correction area, which results in an output signal."

In the Office Action, the Examiner alleges that the claimed "correction area" is designated by the difference signal illustrated in FIG. 3C of Jung. This is incorrect. FIG. 3C of Jung merely discloses the high frequency component of an input image that is eliminated by the low-pass filter 11. Contrary to claim 1, Jung does not compute mask values associated with input samples, and does not designate a correction area corresponding to an area where the mask values are different from zero. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-4 are allowable.

If the Examiner believes that anything further is necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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